



Otter Aquatics Newsletter

No 36. May 2018

Dear swimmers

Welcome to the May 2018 edition of the Otter Aquatics newsletter. Look inside to find:

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New winter venue for our Sunday swimmers

Murrumba Downs Aquatic Centre is now closed for the winter with our last Sunday there being last Sunday, 29 April. From next Sunday, 6 May, we will return to our winter venue of Redcliffe Aquatic Centre, which is on the corner of Oxley Avenue and Sydney Street. It is a 50 metre indoor heated pool. We have lanes 1 and 2 reserved for us on Sunday mornings which we may divide into four 25m lanes from time-to-time. There is ample parking on site with car park entrances off both Sydney Street and Oxley Avenue. The same entry procedure as at present will apply: just tick your name off on the list kept at reception as you enter and place your fees into the box on the pool deck.

We will return to Murrumba Downs Aquatic Centre on Sunday 2 September 2018. There's a diary note for you.

Trial dog off-leash area at Queens Beach North - developments

As I mentioned in the April newsletter, Moreton Bay Regional Council has implemented a dog off-leash trial at our regular open water swimming spot, Queens Beach North, Scarborough. As a group, our OWS swimmers have decided that we do not want this to continue for the reasons stated below.

Our campaign to date has included letterboxing all houses on Flinders Parade – the road facing Queens Beach North, placing a note on our advertising board at the beach on Saturday mornings, phoning and writing to Moreton Bay Regional Council and initiating a petition on Change.org entitled 'Queens Beach North'.

But the most significant action to date is that I have received approval to address a Council meeting on Tuesday 1 May. Wish me well. Here is what I will be saying to Council:

'I would like to make an input to Council's consideration of the above trial dog off-leash area.

I am an open water swimmer and, for the past six years or so, together with a group of friends, I have swum at Queens Beach North, Scarborough, on two or three days per week for fitness and enjoyment. We have done so without incident and in full cooperation with other users of the beach and adjacent waters, headlands and parkland including other exercise groups, fishers, boat, kayak and paddleboard users, as well as other swimmers and family groups. We are a very responsible group and take our own safety and enjoyment of the beach and that of others very seriously.

I have consulted my friends and we believe that a dog off-leash area at Queens Beach North is not in the best interests of the majority of beach users for the following reasons:

-  Dogs are harassing swimmers attempting to enter and exit the water
-  Dogs are interfering with beach-goers' belongings on the beach

-  Some dogs swim in the water with some of them at considerable distance from the shore. Swimming dogs are known shark attractants given their rapid movements in the water and their body smell. They are therefore a hazard to swimmers
-  Dogs may interfere with other creatures on or near the beach including migrating shorebirds, turtles and crabs
-  Queens Beach North does not have perimeter fencing which park-based dog off-leash areas have. Therefore, the owners of dogs off-leash are not easily able to confine them to the beach area leaving many of them to interfere with cyclists, runners and walkers on the footpath, many of them in family groups with small children
-  Owners are also often unable to prevent their dogs going on the road on Flinders Parade thereby becoming a traffic hazard
-  Queens Beach North is some 700 metres long and the more energetic dogs quickly become separated from their owners who are often unaware of their dog's actions, including defecating and being unaware of the need to pick up their dog's waste on the beach
-  Queens Beach North is relatively rock free and is the only beach on the Redcliffe Peninsula where swimmers can enter and leave the water safely at any state of the tide without stubbing their feet on rocks. Therefore we believe that it should be kept for families and others who wish to swim and undertake other water-based activities
-  A particularly upsetting possible outcome of having an unfenced dog off-leash area is the danger posed to guide dogs. A recent report has stated that 50 percent of seeing-eye dogs, or guide dogs, have been attacked by off-leash dogs with some of them being so injured they are unable to work anymore.

I do not wish to suggest that all dogs are untrained or that all owners are irresponsible, but the clear fact is that many are, and they make life hard for the rest.

Some people (including reportedly even one councillor whom I have never met) have suggested that I am a dog hater. I am absolutely not. I have had dogs myself for most of my life.

It would appear that Queens Beach North is to be either a people's beach or a dogs' beach. It cannot be both.'

I'll let everyone know how our campaign develops.

A world record on our doorstep: Brisbane woman swims across Moreton Bay



Jessica Evans crossing Moreton Bay

On Friday 20 April, 30 year old Brisbane woman Jessica Evans set a record when she swam from Bribie Island to Moreton Island becoming the first person to swim across Moreton Bay non-stop and without a shark cage. Jessica swam the 24km in five hours and 15 minutes. The only other recorded cross-Moreton Bay swim was in 1973 when a man swam from Redcliffe to Moreton Island in a shark cage.

The first thought that came to me (and no doubt many others) was 'sharks'. Jessica did not encounter any sharks but she did see a few 'dark shapes' under her at one stage. Whether this is due to the shark deterrent device she wore is a moot point, but it is important to note that this technology is far from proven.

Interestingly, since such records began to be kept in the mid 19th Century, there have been only four recorded shark attacks in Moreton Bay with only one of those (in 1947) being fatal. So perhaps we should make this a regular event – the statistics will be on our side right?

Come Open Water Swimming – it's the best time of the year to do it

We've been OWSing off a number of Redcliffe beaches over the past few weeks and, without doubt, this is the best time of the year to do it. By and large, the weather in autumn is sunny with low winds, still warm-ish water and calm seas with amazing clarity.

Of course, we have had our share of wild weather lately and the strong southeasterly winds have kicked up some decent bumpy water for us ... but that now seems to be largely over. Here are some of our recent swims:

Easter Saturday

We had earlier decided to do a longish swim on the Easter weekend and we weren't about to let a little adverse weather affect our determination. So five of us set off from the southern end of Margate beach towards the surf club at the northern end of Suttons Beach, a distance of 2.1k, a feat made easier than it might have otherwise been by following wind and waves. There we bade farewell to one of our number who decided to walk back along the beach. The remaining four turned around and battled the head wind and waves which made it difficult and just plain bloody tough but also enormously exciting. We shed another of our number half way back and, just to draw attention to himself, yet another of us got stung by a bluebottle. It was his first time to have met with the affections of these critters and he whinged mightily! All we could do was console him and encourage him to push on. The the final three of us eventually got there after a 4.2k remarkable (for us) feat. It sure felt good to stop swimming and to reflect on the incredibly satisfying experience. Our apres-swim coffee that morning was especially good.

Other swims

We followed up the Easter Saturday feat with a piddly 2.6k swim from Queens Beach North to Scarborough and return a few days later plus a couple of (very ordinary by comparison) 2ks.

The last one before this epistle going to print was last week in absolutely perfect conditions: blue sky, high tide, no wind and amazingly flat and clear water. We saw lots of beautiful fish and crabs and explored around some rocks. It was the reward for all our hard work in rough conditions over the previous couple of months.

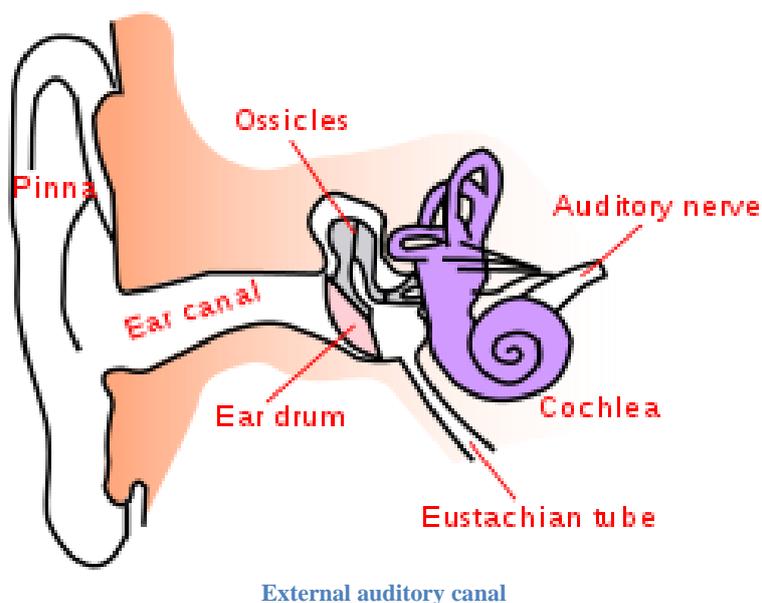
Come with us on Saturdays at Queens Beach North or Tuesdays and Thursdays at Margate Beach. Both start at 8am.

Swimmers Ear: what is it and what can we do about it?

When we swim, we have to put our face in the water, obviously, so much so that our ears are under the water. So, in a normal swimming environment, we cannot avoid getting water in our ears along with every other bodily orifice. This is a normal part of swimming and nothing to be worried about. The best advice is to get used to it as a normal part of communing with nature. Indeed, if you haven't put your ears under water before, you may be amazed at the magnified sounds you hear. But problems may arise if we cannot get the water out of our ears after our swim resulting in pain colloquially known as 'swimmers ear' or more formally as *otitis externa*.

Swimmers Ear is an infection of the outer part of the ear, specifically the external auditory canal (commonly known as the ear canal), which is a narrow canal connecting the visible part of the ear with the eardrum. It is distinguished from Surfers Ear, which is a narrowing of the ear canal caused by benign bony growths. The bony growths themselves develop as a consequence of exposure to cold water, sand and wind and are common in surfers and ocean swimmers. The narrowing of the ear canal can cause water entrapment which predisposes the surfer or swimmer to swimmers ear.

The health of the external auditory canal is maintained by the production of wax (*cerumen*) in the canal which has antibacterial and antifungal properties. It is acidic and is a superb waterproofing agent. The skin of the ear canal also protects against infection by being migratory; in other words, it moves from the depths of the ear canal to the outer part carrying with it debris (e.g. beach sand) from the ear canal itself.



The ear canal has evolved in such a way that it is self-protecting and it is only really when we adversely affect this host defence mechanism that we are likely to develop an episode of swimmers ear. Left in place, the wax will do a great job of preventing *otitis externa*.

It is important not to try to 'clean' the ear, such as with cotton buds. Ear wax is not dirty. In the overwhelming majority of the population, canals do very well if left completely to their own devices. Remember your grandmother's advice that 'nothing smaller than your elbow should be put into your ear'.

Occasionally, wax blocks the ear canal or prevents an appropriate view of the eardrum and, in that circumstance, it needs to be removed and can be done quickly and easily by your GP. Any personal attempt at cleaning your ear should not be attempted. Putting something in your ear may lead to trauma which, in turn, can lead to *otitis externa*. It is unusual that water exposure per se in an otherwise healthy ear canal would precipitate an infection.

In those people who are susceptible to infections, particularly precipitated by periods of water exposure, there are three safe ways to dry the external auditory canal:

- 👂 Use Aqua-Ear, Swimmers Ear or Ear Clear, which are all brand names for mixtures of alcohol and acetic acid and are available at pharmacists. The alcohol acts as an astringent or drying agent and the acetic acid lowers the pH and creates a microbiologically hostile environment.
- 👂 The use of tissue spears (the corner of a tissue folded and placed in the external auditory canal) will not dislodge wax but will wick moisture out of the ear canal
- 👂 A hairdryer on a low setting, both in terms of heat and power, can also be used to dry the external auditory canal.

What about ear plugs? Some people develop *otitis externa* as soon as the ear canal gets wet. They do appear to benefit from the use of ear plugs. But, if you are swimming regularly and you are

using ear plugs on a regular basis, they could potentially be counterproductive because they prevent the ear canal from cleaning itself, their insertion could be traumatic and they may not be efficient.

In sum, the ear canal is best left to its own devices but, if pain persists, you should consult your GP.

This item has been paraphrased from an article in oceanswims.com written by an ENT surgeon. Many thanks.

Stroke trip of the month – the catch

There was an error in the YouTube link for 'the catch' in last month's newsletter. Here is the correct one: <https://youtu.be/vDAypb3uuDU>.

What is it?

It is the process of bringing an arm from where it enters the water and extends horizontally ahead of the body to a position where the forearm and hand are vertical. It is probably the most important part of the freestyle stroke as mastering it will improve your stroke significantly and not to do it will likely result in shoulder injury.

Why do we do it?

We do it to prepare the arm and hand for the best possible position to provide horizontal propulsion. If we provide much muscular energy to the arm while it is in a horizontal position will only tend to lift the upper body up in the water rather than provide propulsion of the body horizontally through the water. So we need to get the arm vertical and in a position perpendicular to the direction we are swimming before we apply muscle to push and pull.

How do we do it?

We need to get the arm into a vertical position without the exertion of much muscular energy, otherwise we risk rotator cuff injury to the shoulders. The best way to achieve this is to employ visualisation. There are five visualisation techniques that work for me, at least one of which should work for most swimmers:

-  Imagine reaching over the top of a barrel in front of you
-  Get the forearm into a vertical position (there is a training aid, called a forearm splint which some people like to use to train for an 'early vertical forearm' – I have one you can use) while maintaining the wrist below the elbow and the elbow below the shoulder
-  Get the upper arm parallel to, and just under, the water's surface
-  Imagine 'two hinges' with the first hinge to move being the elbow and the second the shoulder
-  Imagine swimming in very shallow water and you aim to avoid having your fingers touching the bottom. (Of course, your fingers are always pointed downwards).

Swimmer of the month: Collette Walsh and overcoming aquaphobia

In this, the first in a new series on highlighting the swimming story of one of our swimmers, **Collette Walsh** tells her story:



Collette showing how comfortable in the water she is now

'My very first swimming lesson occurred in my home town in England at the age of about nine. We had to team up in pairs, one girl practising kicking whilst the other supported her. My partner let me go and I went under water, thus beginning a life-long fear of being unsupported in water.

Late last year, about to turn 65, I happened to be chatting with a friend about being unable to swim. He put me in touch with his friend, Mark, and on New Year's Day I went along with much trepidation to Murrumba Downs pool. There I looked longingly at people gliding through the water doing their laps, something I would dearly love to do.

By the end of the first session, Mark did have me floating tentatively on my back, as he had promised. But my progress was by no means smooth, and I'm sure there were times when Mark believed he had met his match! Panic was my frequent companion in the water, and I often thought my desire to swim was just a pipe dream. As a retired psychologist I felt such a failure that I could not cure my own phobia. I tried self-help reading, relaxation exercises, meditation, hypnotherapy, and watched numerous You-tube clips about overcoming fear in the water. All this effort had limited effect. I remained fearful, frustrated and angry with myself, and was on the verge of giving up my quest to become a swimmer.

But Mark is patient and kind, and my husband Neil has been unfailing in his support and encouragement. They both, separately, suggested I have a talk to my GP. So I swallowed my pride and embarrassment, and came away with a prescription for anxiolytic medication from the benzodiazepine family.

The difference has been remarkable! I can now move through the water on my front and my back, from the shallow to the deep end, not only without fear but loving the experience! Doing things I had only dreamed about! I still have to master the technique of breathing between strokes, but am now confident it is only a matter of time. In the next year, I expect to be doing laps on a Sunday morning, no longer watching enviously but taking part as a swimmer

Collette Walsh

Australian and European swimming holidays

Don't forget to let me know if you are interested in any of the 2019 swimming-based holidays. Some people have expressed interest already. Check out <http://www.otteraquatics.com.au/swim-tours.html> for details.

A note from Tracey on swimming caps

A few people have asked on a Sunday where I got my material swim caps. They are from an eBay seller, based in Toombul, Lucy's Envy. Web link is http://stores.ebay.com.au/gentlemen-please-store/Swim-caps-/i.html?_fsub=28867568011

Tracey Lloyd

(ed: Otter Aquatics silicon swimming caps are available for sale for \$10 each at the pool, the beach or wherever you find me.)

Quiz of the month

The answer to last month's quiz question (*why do we concentrate on freestyle in swimfit training?*) is that freestyle is the most efficient stroke in that it propels the swimmer through the water faster and with the least amount of effort compared to the three other competitive strokes. It is also the most complex but, with practice, it is likely to be the most satisfying. Freestyle also exercises all major muscle groups in the body and it creates the mental environment for maximum relaxation. The winner was Ann Foster. She will receive her prize at the next après-swim coffee session (assuming I haven't eaten it beforehand).

This month's quiz question is: 'which of our swimmers has been mentioned more than once in this newsletter?' And for a bonus question: 'how many times has this person been mentioned?'

Quote of the month:

When you are swimming in the open water, remember to swim in harmony with 'the Motion of the Ocean' (MOTO)

Thanks to Therese Puffett for this insight.

Pic of the month (actually a few this month)



Margate Beach looking towards Suttons Beach, 2.1k away. On Easter Saturday, we did it both ways, a total of 4.2k (the return was into the weather and very difficult)



Therese Puffett and Noel Fraser cuddling instead of swimming at Scotts Point



Therese and me at Scotts Point – not cuddling but conferring



Queens Beach North, at least as it was before the off-leash dogs came